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National Intelligence Bulletin

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September 30, 1975

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PORTUGAL

Prime Minister Azevedo is running into trouble in his attempt to take over the leftist-controlled radio and television stations.

All stations have been occupied by security troops, but the stations are ignoring Azevedo's orders that his communique be read every 15 minutes and that all news not received from official sources be subject to government censorship. In at least one station, the security forces have sided with the workers, who appear to be in control.

Representatives of the occupied stations met with security chief Carvalho and Information Minister Almeida Santos last night to discuss the situation, but no conclusions were reached. A crowd of about 3,000 outside the Information Ministry demanded that Carvalho order his troops out of the stations. When he refused, they threatened to take the stations back by force. The unpredictable Carvalho apparently sides with Azevedo on this issue but could give in to extremist pressure.

Azevedo's move on the media is the toughest action his new government has taken to implement the promise to restore "democratic pluralism" to the media and discipline to the military. Azevedo issued the order as acting president while Costa Gomes, well known for temporizing and compromising, is out of the country, visiting Poland and the USSR. Foreign Minister Antunes has postponed his plans to join Costa Gomes because of the current situation.

Azevedo received the unanimous support of the all-military Revolutionary Council before ordering the troops into the radio and television stations, but his ability to control the stations is dependent on the reliability of the troops in Lisbon. Azevedo was thought to have gained an upper hand over dissident radical troops last week when he formed a special force of trusted units to maintain public order. The new force, according to the US defense attache, exists only on paper so far. If Azevedo is forced to back down on the media issue, it would be a serious blow to the credibility and long-term prospects of his government.

In a speech last night, Azevedo appealed for national unity and support of his action. He said the occupation of the radio and television stations is intended to end the media's encouragement of civil disruptions and the exploitation of indiscipline in the armed forces. Demonstrations had been increasing in recent days, with radical soldiers, veterans, and left-wing civilians protesting Azevedo's new government and Spain's execution of terrorists.

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Azevedo's decision was triggered by an attempt by disabled veterans over the weekend to detain members of the cabinet. He ordered commandos to break up the crowd and was heavily criticized by the media. Azevedo also disapproved of the media's call for activists to sack the Spanish embassy in Lisbon on Saturday.

The Prime Minister assured the nation that the occupation measure is temporary and is designed to avoid declaring a state of emergency that would restrict civil liberties. If he does not gain full control soon, a reliable source has told US embassy officials that Azevedo is prepared to declare a state of emergency.



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LEBANON

The Lebanese national conciliation committee met for the second time yesterday. It apparently made some progress on immediate issues affecting the cease-fire, but there was no sign of compromise on basic issues. Prime Minister Karami announced that the committee agreed on steps to remove street barricades, to silence snipers, to close clandestine radio stations, and to prevent further kidnappings.

The committee did solicit the views of the competing groups on how to deal with the causes of the violence that has racked the country. Neither the Christian Phalangists nor their leftist Muslim opponents apparently showed any give in their positions. The discussions are likely to be complicated by Phalangist leader Pierre Jumayyil's insistence on discussing the sensitive question of the Palestinians in Lebanon, a matter that most other participants would prefer to avoid.

The make-up of the committee itself ensures that the talks will be difficult. Leaders of the conservative wing of the Shia Muslims are said to be angry over not being adequately represented. Parliament speaker Kamal al-Asad, a member of this group, has boycotted the meeting.

Karami reportedly is trying to expand the membership of the committee to meet the objections of the Shias, as well as of the Christians east of Beirut who have similar complaints. The leftist followers of Kamal Jumblatt oppose any such change in the committee.

The security situation in Beirut improved again yesterday as shops and stores began to reopen. Most banks were closed, but were expected to reopen today. Some shooting broke out during the day, but was quickly brought under control by the security forces.

The army has taken over the job of keeping order in the commercial areas of Beirut, leaving other areas to the internal security forces and to the Palestine Liberation Organization. The PLO has assumed responsibility for security in the western part of Beirut.

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LAOS

A confrontation between the US embassy in Vientiane and former embassy guards demanding additional severance pay was averted last week. Nevertheless, the embassy and other non-communist missions are finding it increasingly difficult to function as the communists tighten control.

Non-communist diplomats are encountering problems conducting routine business and are facing administrative barriers created by the new communist administration. Non-communist government officials have been replaced or circumvented by the communists and access to the new communist authorities is sporadic. While the situation appears, at least in part, an outgrowth of communist efforts to remove the remaining vestiges of the old regime and to consolidate control, it may also represent an attempt further to isolate select diplomatic missions in the hope of eventually "putting them out of business."

The closure of banks in Vientiane for "audit" purposes has caused serious problems for several missions. US embassy accounts in two of the banks remain blocked, and communist officials are contemplating the seizure of part of one account in the National Bank of Laos which contains AID trust funds. French officials are concerned about the confinement of members of the staff of the Bank of Indochina and have taken the position that there will be no additional aid to Laos until the bank question is resolved. The British ambassador has also registered a strong protest with the Lao Ministry of Foreign Affairs over the banking issue.



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CUBA

Fidel Castro strongly endorsed the cause of independence for Puerto Rico on Sunday. He thus lent his personal prestige to an issue that has become a major stumbling block in the path of normalizing relations with the US. His remarks apparently were intended as a response to what he labeled "strong statements" by US officials.

In a long speech otherwise devoted to internal Cuban affairs, Castro spoke briefly about Puerto Rico and the US. He implied that Cuban solidarity with the cause of Puerto Rican independence is a matter of principle and that it will not be renounced in order to improve relations with the US. He added, "If that is not understood, we will know how to be as patient as necessary."

Contrary to some press accounts of the speech, Castro did not depart from the now-standard Cuban position regarding Puerto Rico. Nothing he said indicated a retreat from his stated willingness to begin negotiations with the US to settle bilateral differences.

Puerto Rican independence, while a genuine Cuban goal, is also being used by Havana to bolster its revolutionary credentials in the Third World.

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CANADA

Prime Minister Trudeau's cabinet shake-up on September 26 strengthened the influence of staunch nationalists.

The most important shift was the appointment of Donald Macdonald as finance minister. Although his economic views are not well known, the US embassy believes his appointment could signal hard times ahead for Canadian-US economic relations. Macdonald's nationalist sentiments are well known, and he can be very tough, [redacted] in negotiations.

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Alastair Gillespie, heretofore minister for trade, industry and commerce, moves over to Macdonald's old job as energy, mines and resources minister. In commenting on this appointment, a senior energy ministry official told a US diplomat, "The last thing we need here now is an even more nationalistic minister." Given his past record, Gillespie is likely:

- to push hard for increased upgrading of natural resources prior to export;
- to accelerate efforts to reduce Canadian dependence on US coal imports;
- to uphold Macdonald's opposition to any course of action that smacks of a continental energy policy.

John Turner, who resigned two weeks ago as finance minister, was an influential voice in the cabinet for close consultation and cooperation with the US, not only on economic affairs but in other areas as well.

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CHILE: The Pinochet government has reiterated its refusal to allow traditional political parties a voice in running the government. The action came in a strongly worded Interior Ministry statement, which implied that two letters written by Christian Democratic Party leaders discussing alleged cooperation with parties of the left might violate Chile's ban on partisan politics. Although not a blanket condemnation of the Christian Democratic Party, the government's action is a disappointment to the party's hopes and to its senior spokesman, former president Eduardo Frei, who was tacitly invited to participate in a proposed council of state to advise the junta. This action will make Frei's participation in the council even more doubtful.

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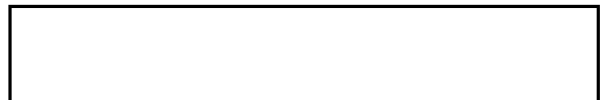
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